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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/03/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV KPAL ASEC BA IS REGION
SUBJECT: BAHRAIN CONDEMNS ISRAELI ACTIONS IN GAZA

Classified by DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The Bahraini Cabinet, Foreign Minister, and parliament all condemned Israel's attacks on Gaza, arrest of officials and parliamentarians, and destruction of infrastructure in separate statements over the past few days. The statements focused on perceived Israeli violations of international law and continued Bahraini support for the Palestinian people. A group of political and civil society organizations held a rally July 2 outside the UN mission in Manama to urge UN protection of Palestinians and to criticize an international double standard in dealing with Israelis and Palestinians. In their June 30 Friday prayer sermons, major clerics criticized Israel's actions and U.S. protection of Israel. Thus far the scene in Bahrain has been quiet but, despite the distance, incidents in the Palestinian territories can spill over into Manama's streets. We will continue to monitor the situation closely. End Summary.

Officials, Parliamentarians Criticize Israel

¶2. (U) The Bahraini Cabinet July 2 issued a statement that strongly condemned Israel's continued attacks on Gaza, arrest of Palestinian officials, and "atrocious" destruction of infrastructure. Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shaikh Ahmed bin Attiyatallah Al Khalifa told the press following the Cabinet meeting that the international community should intervene immediately to halt the Israeli "violations of international laws and conventions." The Cabinet reaffirmed Bahrain's "unflinching" support for the Palestinian people's struggle for their rights, and their efforts to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

¶3. (U) The Cabinet action followed on the heels of a statement by Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa on June 29 that appealed for international intervention to stop Israeli "brutality." Shaikh Khalid called on Israel to stop using the issue of the kidnapped soldier as an excuse to attack innocent people and destroy the Palestinian infrastructure.

¶4. (U) The elected lower house of parliament, the Council of Representatives (COR), also issued a statement July 2 expressing great concern over the dangerous developments and strongly denouncing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. The COR stressed that the attack on the Palestinian legislative establishment was more proof of the "alien conduct" of Israel, which places itself above international law. It called on the international community to pressure Israel to release the seized parliamentarians.

Rally In Support of Palestinians

¶5. (U) A group of political and civil society organizations held a rally July 2 outside the UN diplomatic mission in Bahrain. The demonstrators called on the UN to protect Palestinians from the Israeli military offensive. The groups, which included leading Shia opposition society Al Wifaq, the secular Al Waad society, and the Society for Resisting Normalization with the Zionist Enemy, criticized the international community and Arab governments for what they described as a double standard in dealing with Palestinians. One of the organizers told the press, "The world is up in arms demanding the release of a soldier who was caught in battle while placing our people under siege, but no one bats an eye for the ten thousand-plus Palestinian prisoners, which include many women and children."

Clerics Denounce American Green Light for Israel

¶6. (U) Major clerics addressed the Israeli actions in their Friday prayer sermons on June 30. Shia Shaikh Ali Salman criticized what he said was the American green light for Israel's aggression. He complained that "money and force" outweigh spirit, justice, and fairness. Sunni Shaikh Salah Al Jowder said Israel's provocative acts spread hatred and malice among nations. He continued, "All claim tolerance, freedom, and democracy but reality negates this as innocent civilians are being killed." Arabic daily Akhbar Al Khaleej columnist Abdullah Al Ayoobi wrote July 2 that America is a partner with Israel in these "crimes" against the Palestinian people because it provides cover by using the term "right to self-defense" to justify Israel's actions. The Palestinians have no choice but to continue their struggle even if they have to pay a high price.

Comment

¶7. (C) In contrast to the rhetoric of the government, parliament, clerics, and commentators, thus far the security scene has been quiet and we have detected no surge of public anger over events in Gaza. We continue to monitor the situation closely and will report any change. Despite the physical and political distance, Bahrainis sympathize with the plight of Palestinians and events in the territories can spill over into the streets of Bahrain.

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